



CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Emergency Drought Barrier Removal Underway in Delta

Temporary Barrier Blocked Salt Water Intrusion, Will Be Gone by Mid-November

SACRAMENTO – Work by the Department of Water Resources (DWR) to dismantle an emergency drought barrier that has spanned West False River between Jersey and Bradford islands since June is well underway, with breach in the barrier expected today.

The barrier was erected to block salt water from pushing into the central Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta from San Francisco Bay. The Delta's water is used by 25 million Californians, including residents of the Delta and Contra Costa, Alameda and Santa Clara counties. DWR's State Water Project and the federal Central Valley Project convey Delta water through their aqueducts to distant parts of the state.

A fourth year of drought made installation of the barrier necessary to preserve Delta water quality and conserve water in upstream reservoirs that otherwise would have been released to help block incoming tides of salty water from San Francisco Bay.

Permits issued to DWR for installation of the barrier require removal in November due to fishery and potential flood concerns.

Dismantling of the approximately 750-foot rock barrier began on September 8 and will be completed by mid-November. About 150,000 tons of large rocks (riprap) were used to build the barrier. Cranes have removed about 22,000 tons of riprap on the downstream side of the barrier along its length between the West False River's banks, thereby narrowing the width while not lowering the barrier's height.

Continued removal of the riprap this week should allow water to begin flowing over what remains of the barrier on or shortly after October 1. Dismantling of the remaining submerged portions of the barrier will continue until all of it is removed and boating restrictions are ended at that location. The removed riprap will be stored near Rio Vista for possible use if drought conditions continue and installation of an emergency drought barrier once again is deemed necessary to preserve water quality.

The barrier was an essential part of DWR's strategy to maintain good water quality in the Delta and preserve water in upstream reservoirs to help keep young salmon cool enough to stay alive downstream of dams.

Paul Marshall, Chief of DWR's Bay-Delta Office, said the barrier performed as expected based on DWR's computer modeling. "The water users in the interior of the Delta, including many farmers and residents there, would have experienced much higher salinity without it," he said. "The barrier has achieved what

we intended, and having it go in by early June helped us to counter high tides experienced later that month.”

Video footage and photos of the barrier removal will be available here after 3 p.m. today:

<https://fts.water.ca.gov/owncloud/public.php?service=files&t=47651ece8fd54e14f10bab82ab28a399>

Additional information on the barrier and the considerations that led to its deployment can be found at DWR’s Emergency Drought Barriers website:

<http://water.ca.gov/waterconditions/emergencybarriers.cfm>.

Additional information and a FAQ are contained in DWR’s May 8 press release on the project:

<http://www.water.ca.gov/news/newsreleases/2015/050815.pdf>

To learn about all the actions the state has taken to manage our water system and cope with the impacts of the drought, visit Drought.CA.Gov.

Every Californian should take steps to conserve water. Find out how at SaveOurWater.com.

The State’s turf and toilet rebate program is explained at SaveOurWaterRebates.com.

More information on emergency drought barriers [is available here](#).

Conservation – the wise, sparing use of water – remains California’s most reliable drought management tool. Each individual act of conservation, such as letting the lawn go brown or replacing a washer in a faucet to stop a leak, makes a difference over time.

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The Department of Water Resources operates and maintains the State Water Project, provides dam safety and flood management and inspection services, assists local water districts in water management and water conservation planning, and plans for future statewide water needs.



FAQ: 2015 Emergency Barrier Removal At West False River

October 2015

What happened here?

In order to help deter the tidal push of saltwater from San Francisco Bay into the central Delta during California's extreme drought, the Department of Water Resources (DWR) installed an emergency temporary rock barrier across West False River, a Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta channel. The barrier helped keep saltier water to the west and protected water quality for people who live in the Delta, for Contra Costa, Alameda and Santa Clara counties and for other Californians who rely on the State Water Project (SWP) and Central Valley Project (CVP).

During construction, sheet piles and basketball-sized rocks were placed in the river. The temporary barrier spanned this approximately 750-foot wide channel between Jersey and Bradford Islands.

State and federal water and wildlife officials on the Real-Time Drought Operations Management Team selected this single project site to install an emergency barrier in 2015 for its ability to help protect water quality while posing the least harm for threatened and endangered fish.

What's happening now?

DWR began removing the barrier in early September. On or after the first of October, the barrier will be breached, allowing water to again flow past the barrier into Frank's Tract. Full removal of the rock in the channel will be completed by November 15. During the removal work, boat passage will not be allowed due to safety concerns given the large number of barges and cranes removing rock in the area.

How well did the barrier work?

Monitoring at various stations in the Delta showed that the barrier indeed helped improve water quality in the central and south Delta. Results were comparable to those forecasted by DWR's modeling work prior to the barrier's installation. Improved water quality allowed continued use of Delta waters for in-Delta agriculture, municipal and industrial uses and minimal exports by the SWP and CVP.

What happens if the drought continues?

Although water year 2015-16 is forecasted to be wetter than the past four drought years, DWR must plan for the possible continuation of the drought. DWR is pursuing permits that might be needed for a spring 2016 installation of the West False River barrier if water conditions indicate California is indeed in its fifth year of drought.

Where can I find more information?

Please see [DWR's emergency drought barriers webpage](#) and visit saveourwater.com for easy water-saving tips.



